

ALL ARE GUILTY

NO. 3457

A SERMON
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“Pilate saith unto them....Let him be crucified.”
Matthew 27:22-23

THIS morning [See Sermon #678, Volume 12—PRAISE YOUR GOD, O ZION] we heard the shouts of “Hosanna!” It was very delightful to us to behold the multitude marching with the King of Zion through the streets of Jerusalem, welcoming Him with glad acclaim. But the shouts of “Hosanna” had hardly died away before they were followed by the cruel note, “Crucify him! crucify him!” Or as the text puts it, “Let him be crucified!”

Clearly in this case the *Vox populi* was not the *Vox Dei*. The one is fickle and shifting, the other is fixed and steadfast. The voice of the people is changeable as the wind. The Word of the Lord is firm as a rock and it endures forever. The multitude will always be found fitful and vacillating. They will enthrone a man today and chase him from the streets tomorrow.

Take but small account of human applause. The breath of fame’s trumpet is a poor reward for a life of toil to serve one’s generation. Care not for it, O you of noble spirit! Heed not the world’s frowns and court not its smiles. When you are flattered by its approbation, or calumniated by its persecution, remember that men’s temper and disposition vary like the climate and alter like the weather. Hosannas turn into execrations. The idol of one hour is the aversion of another.

The point, however, to which I shall endeavor to draw your attention tonight (and may the Holy Ghost assist us) is of far more importance than the prattling gossip of the vulgar crowd. In this sad and brutal cry, “Let him be crucified,” I observe—

I. A VERY STRANGE ILLUSTRATION OF THE ASSERTED DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

I have heard till I have been sick of hearing, I have read till I am weary of reading, all sorts of laudations passed upon it. I know not what a grand and noble being the creature man is in the estimation of certain lackadaisical divines. They seem to make this their chief end—to laud and magnify their own species.

The drift of all their preaching is to please men’s ears with their rhetoric and to delude men’s judgment with their flattery, and as for their logic, it exalts the ideal of man, while it ignores the actual sinner. It sets up the image and says, “Behold what a splendid intellectual creature man is!” We look around and fail to catch a sight of the individuals they portray.

I hesitate not to say that he who praises man does the opposite to glorifying God and is as far as the poles asunder from testifying to the truth. The truth, as we learn it in the Word of God, is most uncomplimentary to man—it rolls him in the very dust, ranks him with the worms, makes nothing of him—yea, less than nothing.

So desperate is his moral condition that it adjudges him as his only fit place, the lowest pit of hell, as the due reward of his deeds. But inasmuch as they thus praise human nature, I would like the admirers of it to look a little while on this scene—where humanity gathers around the Savior Christ the Lord, and cries, “Crucify him! crucify him!”

And first, what say you to this dignity of human nature, in that *it does not know God*? This is taking the sin at the lowest point, for had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. Through ignorance they did it—ignorance alike on the part of the rabble and their rulers. It is the best excuse that can possibly be afforded for their cry, their cruelty, and their crime.

But what an excuse! How humiliating! Here were men who did not know the God that made them! Why boast of intellect—the keen perception of the human mind in the face of such imbecility? They did not know the God that fed them! “The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master’s crib,” but Israel did not know her Lord, her King, her God.

He came with a thousand prophecies to herald Him, and He answered to them all. The simplest Sunday school child reading through the Old Testament can see that the Christ of the New Testament is He of whom the seers and the prophets spake in vision by the power of the Spirit. But here was human nature left to itself with the book in its hand, and totally unable to decipher the evidences or recognize the Messiah.

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. You call this “bright-eyed human nature,” and it cannot see the sun! You talk about its superior intelligence, and yet that which was an axiom to angels, *they* could not discern. Angels knew Him—how could they fail to know Him? But these eyes of men are so blinded with the mire of prejudice and the love of sin, that though the Godhead shone gloriously through the manhood of Jesus, they could not—*they would not* perceive Him to be the Christ.

And they put the Son of God, the Heir of heaven, to an ignominious death. Talk no more of wisdom! Boast you not of your sages! Cry not up your philosophy and your deep erudition! Oh! the bat has brighter eyes than you, and moles see more than do those men who, groveling in the earth, fail to perceive the Lord! Men knew not God Himself when He was incarnate in human flesh.

The sin, however, was of a deeper dye when men said, “Crucify him! crucify him!” Clearly, human nature *hated goodness in its most attractive form*. A flattering preacher once closed a glowing period with some such words as these—“O Virtue, you fair and lovely object, could you descend among men, and appear in your perfection, all men would prostrate themselves before you as a deity, and you would be beloved of all mankind.”

What monstrous assumption! What an extravagant perversion of fact! Virtue did descend into this world and was incarnate. That incarnate Virtue they hailed not as “God,” but as “devil.” Instead of worshipping Him, they hounded Him even to death, and nailed Him to the tree. In our Lord Jesus Christ there was perfect virtue. You cannot detect an error. No, neither an excrescence or a deficiency.

Yet virtue consists not merely in abstaining from harm, but it involved the exercise of every faculty in doing good. His character was matchless and His goodness was set in the most attractive sphere, for, mark you, it was not virtue in majestic mien, like that of Lycurgus, enacting laws and administering the prerogatives of government. Or like that of Moses writing upon the tables of stone, statutes and ordinances of infinite verity, having the sanctions of God with consequences of faithful indemnity or of fearful penalty.

His was virtue in the attitude of lowly service, with the emotions of tender sympathy, proving itself by acts of unflinching benevolence. He did not come to tell men they must do this and that, but He came to show them and to teach them how to do the will of God from the heart. It was virtue irradiated with pity, adorned with patience, bejeweled with richest love—ever and anon kindly affectioned. His was benevolence more rare, for it was unique. Never was there greater love than that of Christ.

Sometimes virtue becomes repulsive to men because of its sternness—they cannot bear a perfect law if, like that of Draco, it should be written in blood. But here was Christ, all affable and amiable—a man among men. He was with them at their wedding feasts and with them at their funeral rites. He was to men a brother, and He showed and proved Himself such indeed.

Yet, for all that, virtue thus comely, thus embellished, thus familiar in the habitations of mankind, He was disliked, abhorred, and hunted to the death. Sometimes men oppose goodness if they see it in high places—they will envy the rank and therefore, forget the virtue. But here was the Christ of God in lowliness, wearing the peasant’s garb—eating the bread of the people—poor, ay, so poor that He had not even so much wealth as the fox that has its hole or the bird that has a nest where to lay its head.

Surely virtue which condescended to such a condition ought to have secured the admiration of mankind! And Christ had laid aside all His princely power. He did not come as a King with sovereign

rule, to compel men to do His bidding. Sometimes men will revolt against that which seems to coerce them. They say they will be drawn, but they will not be driven. But Christ was no driver. As a shepherd goes before his sheep, so He gently led the way.

And yet, perfect, immaculate virtue—virtue enshrined in everything that was attractive—without anything that ought to have excited animosity. Incarnate virtue. How did it fare? Hear then, O you that boast of human dignity and the glory of human nature!—this Holy One was made the central object for all the arrows of malice and of spite. He in whom these excellencies were exhibited had for His reward of honor the cry, “Let him be crucified.” O poor fallen human nature—what do you say to this?

I impeach humanity again of the utmost possible folly, because in crucifying Christ, *it crucified its best friend*. Jesus Christ was not only the friend of man, so as to take human nature upon Himself, but He was the friend of sinners, so that He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. The only errand that Christ pursued in life was an unselfish one. Everybody could see that.

He neither hoarded wealth, nor gained high places in the government. Neither did He seek popular esteem. He saved others, but for Himself, He reserved nothing. He gave up all for the sons of men. Yet when they could clearly see that the best and most self-denying of all philanthropists was before them, they treated Him as a criminal, and nail Him to a cross.

What a friend He was to those who conspired against Him as a foe! How generously He had espoused the cause of those very people who now turned upon Him and said, “Let him be crucified.” He had healed their sick. He had raised their dead. He had opened the eyes of their blind and He had restored the withered limbs of their paralyzed. For which of these things did they crucify Him?

He was evermore the people’s friend, the champion of the populace. He came to break oppression, to set the captive free, and all that heard Him must have known that He was the great prophet of liberty, the uplifter of the fallen, the destroyer of everything that was oppressive, unjust, or even unmerciful. Still, though never man was such a friend as He, this stupid world, this worse than swinish world, must put its best friend to death. O humanity! Blush for yourself, lest angels blush at your impiety and even devils laugh at your infatuation.

Then there was this about human nature—*it destroyed its best instructor*. The teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the confession of His enemies, was too sound to be disparaged and He was too wise to be entangled in the meshes of their controversies. He never taught tyranny. Commend me to a single sentence in the whole of Christ’s teaching that would make a despot sit more steadfastly upon his throne.

He never taught anarchy. Find, if you can, a single word that would make men burst the bonds of righteous fidelity and lead lawless lives. He taught no asceticism that would denude life of wholesome pleasure or healthful enjoyment. Far, far was He, on the other hand, from teaching any libertinism that would tolerate anything that is unclean, unchaste or impure, in word or deed.

His teaching was for man—instructing him in what was best for him to do, how it was best to do it, and in what was necessary for his own good that he should eschew and avoid. “Never man spoke like this man!”

I was in the Hall of Philosophers a little while ago, where were the busts of Socrates, and Plato, and Solon, and all the great men of former ages. But if they were all put together, of what small account were the maxims that they taught mankind for the promotion of real happiness and true goodness? Why, the sum total is nothing in comparison with that one sermon of the Christ of Nazareth which He preached upon the Mount. That one sermon put into the scale outweighs the wisdom of Greece and Rome.

And yet, when the man had come who unselfishly, lovingly, tenderly, wisely would lead our fallen race into the paths of holiness and onward to the goal of perfect happiness, what did humanity do but grind its teeth, and gather up its weapons and say, “Away with such a fellow from the earth—it is not fit that He should live!” Alas, human nature! How demented and imbecile you are! The very beasts might lay claim to more sagacity and shrewdness than you have.

Then, too, those who boast of human nature, might, perhaps, say that the multitude on that occasion were not so much to blame as the priests, for the priests persuaded the people. Ay, sirs, I grant you that. But I suppose priests are human, though I sometimes question it. Surely, if ever a man comes to be near akin to a devil, it must be when he assumes to be a priest, and to have the power to open and to shut the gates of heaven and hell.

I would rather any day a man call me a demon than a priest. There is something so degraded, so detestable in the profession of a priest that my soul loathes it. I would tear off the last rag of priestcraft that ever stuck to my flesh and feel it to be like that tunic of fire which burned into the flesh of the heroes of old. Away with it!

But what must men be—what must human nature be that it submits to priests? I say you degrade human nature further when you say they put Christ to death because they submitted to the persuasions of the priests. It is true, but where is the manhood of man, that he will be led by the nose by a fellow man, who chooses to put on a strange, uncouth garb, and feign himself the messenger of God, while he perverts the oracles of God and teaches lies? When will the day come that human nature will prove itself to have pure mettle and manly spirit in it by shaking off the horrible iniquities of priestcraft?

Set this crime down to priestcraft, if you will. The priests do conspire—they always did and always will conspire to set the people against God and against Christ. But where is manhood that it should put itself beneath the foot of such a thing—a thing that men call a priest? Shame on you, human nature, that you should become so abject as to be the football of a priest, and submit yourself to an order which sacrilegiously usurps divine authority, and insolently tyrannizes over human conscience.

I must close this indictment against human nature with its vaunted dignity by accusing it of *wanton cruelty in slaying a defenseless man*. Who ever thought it to be other than dastardly to strike a man who will not defend himself, or to smite one who, being smitten, only turns the other cheek?

Cowardice! Cowardice! Cowardice, craven, base, lies at your door, O humanity! The Christ who was like a sheep—harmless and defenseless—was treated as if He had been one of the wild beasts of the forest. Who could have had the heart to smite Him who gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair?

O humanity! If I stand at the bar to impeach you, I scarce know where to commence the indictment, and having commenced it, I know not where to close it. How fallen, dishonored, infamous are you, O humanity! Low, depraved, heinous, indeed, have you become that you could put the Messiah Himself to death, and crucify the Lord of Glory.

Passing onward, I shall now occupy a few minutes as I—

II. ENDEAVOR TO CLOSE THE DOOR AGAINST CERTAIN SELF-RIGHTEOUS DISCLAIMERS.

I think I hear one and another of you say, “But I would not have done so. I will not allow that my nature be so corrupt or abandoned.” Hark you, friend! Is not your self-esteem a little suspicious? Of whom were you born but of a woman, as they were? Your circumstances may be somewhat different. Praise your circumstances, not yourself, for had you been in their circumstances, you would have done the same.

It is suspicious, I say, when a man begins to say, “I am better than these.” Why, this is just what those very persons, the priests of old, pretended. What said they but this, “We will build the sepulchers of the prophets whom our fathers slew, for had we lived in our fathers’ day, we would not have slain them.” And by that very speech of theirs—that self-righteous speech—the Lord Jesus said that they proved that they were the true sons of their fathers. When men begin to plead that they’re so much better than others, that they would not have done such things, the suspicion crosses one’s mind that they know not what spirit they are of. Certainly they are rather proud in heart than humble in mind.

But now what would you have done if you had been there. A French king who once heard this story said, “I wish I had been there with ten thousand of my guards! I’d have cut the throat of every man of them.” Just so. No doubt that is what he would have done—and in so doing he would have crucified the

Savior in the worst possible way, for he would have implicated the Savior in a bloody massacre, which had been to Christ a worse crucifixion, if worse could be than which He did suffer. Outspoke the man in the truth and honesty of his soul, and he confessed that he would practically have crucified the Savior.

“But” says one, “I would have spoken for Him, had I been there.” Yes, and do you speak for Him now? “Well, I would not hear Him maligned,” says one. But suppose your life depended on it, or your office, or your fame? I will tell you what you would have done—you would have spoken for Him, like Pilate, and washed your hands and said, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person. See ye to it.”

You would have gone no farther than that, I warrant you, unless your heart was renewed—unless Christ had changed your heart, and I am not dealing now with renewed human nature, nor with changed hearts—I am speaking of that which is originally in us men. And if we had gone as far as Pilate, I fear there is not one of us but would have gone farther.

To come to close quarters with you, dear hearer, if you are an unsaved, unregenerate man, I will ask you what you have done already. Perhaps I speak to some here who have made a sneer at the Gospel. You have been accustomed to ridicule it, and when you have heard of anyone who has been peculiarly bold in the service of Christ, without inquiring whether your verdict was true or not, you set him down at once as being a hypocrite, a fanatic, or a fool.

Now, I ask you whether that spirit which leads you to malign the Christian is not precisely that spirit which led others to condemn the Christ, and to say, “Crucify him! crucify him!” In one age they nail men to a cross of wood. In another age, when they cannot do that, they hold them up to contempt—the spirit is just the same.

There lived a man a hundred years ago in this land whose whole life was spent in the service of Christ—a man of gigantic talents, who attracted thousands to listen to his ministry—a man who never spent a farthing of worldly pelf, but lived to win souls, to feed the poor and bless the sick. Now that man, Whitefield, was so abused, and traduced, and slandered, that even Cowper, when he sung his praises, had to begin them thus—

*“Leuconomus (beneath well-sounding Greek,
I hide a name, a poet must not speak).”*

Though he proceeds to speak highly of him, he does not mention his name, except under the Greek form. And so there have lived in this world men of whom the world was not worthy—and the only return they have had has been abuse. What is this but the same spirit which crucified the Lord?

But you tell me you have persecuted nobody and you have ridiculed nobody? I am glad to hear it, but what is your standing now with regard to the Christ of the Gospel? Are you trusting in Him? Are you relying on Him as your Savior? Have you given up all your good works and are you depending upon what He has done?

Do you answer, “No”? Then I tell you, you are crucifying Him. You are rejecting Him in the point on which He is most jealous—you are setting up yourself your own savior in opposition to Him—and this is to Him a worse grief and a direr insult even than the nailing of Him to the accursed tree.

Oh! but you say you have not set up any righteousness of your own. You don’t think at all about the matter—you don’t care about it. Be it so, then, according to your own admission, albeit the Pharisees would give thirty pieces of silver for Him, you would not give twopence for Him. There is the only difference.

You have the Gospel brought to you and when you hear it, you criticize the speaker—that is all. You have the Bible, and when you get it, you bind it in morocco—and put it on a shelf and never read it. And perhaps, many of this congregation, though living in the land of Gospel light, are quite ignorant of what the Gospel is.

Oh! sirs, is not this to crucify Him? This is to ignore Him and this is not only to kill Him, but to bury Him. You have wrapped Him in the winding sheet and laid Him in His grave as best you can. You have,

in fact, said, “It is nothing to me. I care not for His book, nor His people, nor His cross, except it be an ornament after the way of the world’s church—but as to the essence, and marrow, and truth of the thing, I will have none of it.” Oh! this is the cry of many, and while they so cry let them not hope self-righteously to excuse themselves.

But I address some tonight who would shudder at all this, and say, “Oh! sir, I have neither persecuted His people nor thought lightly of Him. Neither have I been negligent concerning Him, for oh! I long to be saved by Him. I seek His face day and night, and confess my sins into His ear, and I ask for pardon through His blood.”

Beloved, I am glad to hear you say this, but I must ask you a question too. Have you ever doubted whether He could save you? Do you doubt now whether He is willing to save you? Ah! then you crucify Him, for there is nothing that so grieves Him as that unkind, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling to forgive. This touches Him in the heart. This pierces His heart as with a spear, for you to think that He will not, or cannot, pardon you.

Be guilty of this no longer. Satan told you it was humility—nay, but it is dishonoring your Savior. Come, poor awakened sinner, full of guilt, and full of fear, and say, “I do believe. I will believe that He is both able and willing to save me.” Then, but not until then, may you be able to say, “I have not crucified Him.”

Now I shall leave that, more especially to address—

III. THOSE WHO HAVE CONFESSED THE SIN OF CRUCIFYING CHRIST AND HAVE RECEIVED PARDON FOR IT.

Beloved, we are coming to the table of the Lord. With what profound emotions should these meditations fill our breasts as we observe this ordinance? When we remember that our sins did crucify Christ (for He would not have needed to have died if we had not sinned), we ought to think of it with deep repentance.

*“’Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were:
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief a spear.*

*“’Twas you that pulled the vengeance down
Upon His guiltless head;
Break, break my heart, yea, burst mine eyes,
And be my coldness dead.”*

Oh! what a sorrow to think we stabbed our friend in the heart. For our sake He died. There was a little bit of poetry some of us used to repeat at school, “The death of Gellert.” When the Welsh chieftain found that in hot-blooded haste he had slain the hound that had saved his child, he wept right bitterly. That was for a dog.

If you went home tonight and found that you had by some mischance killed your friend, and he had died, and by his death had saved your life, I know you would treasure up his memory. But it is the Christ of God that you and I have murdered by our sins. They say, in old tradition, that as often as ever Peter heard a cock crow, he was accustomed to weep. And as often as we come to this table, we might very well be accustomed to weep, too, to think that our sins made our Savior bleed.

Then what a holy jealousy should stir within us! If my sins did this, by God’s Holy Spirit’s help, there shall be an end of my sins. Away with you, ye murderers, I will not spare you!—neither the pleasurable sin, nor the profitable sin, nor the fashionable sin, nor the little sin, as men call it. I cry, “Revenge!” against my sins and slay the murderers too. Oh! ask for grace tonight that you may put sin to death.

And once more, when we remember that our sins crucified Him, how it ought to waken in our souls a devout resolution that we will crown Him! Did they say, “Crucify him! crucify him!”? Then our voice

shall be still louder,” Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!” And does a ribald world still say, “Crucify him!”? Then we who have received the second birth will say, “Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!”

The world still clamors, “Crucify!” Go forth, you sons of God, and proclaim the coronation of the Christ who once wore the crown of thorns. Blush not and be not afraid to defend Him before His adversaries, for He will soon come to put His adversaries to shame, and on His head shall His crown flourish forever.

I would, coming to this table tonight, speak thus to my heart—O my soul, was Jesus put thus to suffering for you? Then what can you do for Him? Have you an unbroken alabaster box in all your possessions? Then bring it out now. Can you not devise some new way by which you might serve Him, yet so as to bring yourself to the pinch to bear much sacrifice with stern self-denial?

Come, my soul, do something that you may glorify Him. Give to His cause. Help His poor. Speak to His wounded ones. Console His distressed people, lay yourself out for Him. Are there any members of this church that are doing nothing for Jesus? Oh! I pity you, my dear brothers and sisters, if you are idle! But while I cannot suggest to you what to do, I pray the Lord to put it into your hearts tonight to do something more than you have ever done to honor Christ.

You need not tell anybody about it—the less said about it the better. Go and do it, not letting your left hand know what your right hand does. Go and weave some crown for Him, though it is but of the poor fading flowers of your heart’s love. Do go and honor Him. You cannot wipe out the dishonor you have caused Him in your former estate, but you can do something—you can bring Him honor as long as you have any being by bringing others, through the help of His blessed Spirit, to love and honor Him.

God grant us a refreshing season at the communion table—may we have the company of the King Himself.

Now are there any here that confess their guilt in the death of Christ? Then let me say to every sinner here, if you will look to Him that was pierced, you shall live. There is only one look at Jesus that is needed to give you pardon. “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” You have nailed Him to the cross—now look at Him. Moses hung the serpent on the pole—then looked himself and bade all Israel look. I, who had my share in crucifying Him, do look tonight. He is all my salvation—I trust in nothing else. Look you, then—aye, look you!

God help you now to look, each one, and you are saved. God grant it, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 1:19-33; 19:1-16

JOHN 1:19-33

Verses 19-28. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

Was that the place where the Israelites crossed the Jordan? It is said to have been so, and truly this is the place where we cross the Jordan too—come out of old Judaism into the true faith of the revealed Christ.

29. *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

I think I hear the Elijah-like tones of that son of the desert, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

30. *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

Ah! how infinitely before John. How before him having no beginning of days, before him in His exalted nature, before him in His superior rank and office!

31. *And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore have I come baptizing with water.*

It was by baptism that the Christ was to be known. John knew more of Jesus Christ than anybody else, yet he did not know Him to be the Lamb of God until he had baptized Him.

32-33. *And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*

I doubt not that John had assuredly guessed that Jesus was the Person, but he had nothing to do with guesses—he was a witness for God and he could only speak as God revealed things to him.

JOHN 19:1-16

Verses 1-3. *Then Pilate, therefore, took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe. And said, Hail, King of the Jews!*

Just as they were gathered to say, “Ave Imperator”—“Hail emperor”—so imitating that word which they applied to Caesar, and applying it to Jesus in mockery, “King of the Jews,” the utmost scorn was thrown into the last word, “of the Jews.” There had been a general tradition that there should arise among the Jews a king who would subdue the nations—and the Romans jested at the very thought that they should be conquered by the leader of such a despised race as the Jews, and so they said, “King of the Jews.”

3-4. *And they struck him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.*

That is the second time he said it. He had declared it before—in the 38th verse of the previous chapter we read, “I find in Him no fault at all.” And now again, “That ye may know that I find no fault in him.” “Then came Jesus forth”—you can see Him going down the steps out of Pilate’s Hall into that same courtyard—“wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them”—“Ecce Homo”—“behold the man.” He does not call Him king—he only gives Him the title of man. As if to say, “How foolish are you to think there is any danger from Him—look at Him in all His suffering and shame.”

5-6. *Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.*

That is the third time. It was well that he who had the principal hand in the slaughter of the Lamb of God should make his report that He was “a Lamb without blemish and without spot” and therefore, fit to be presented in sacrifice before God. For the third time he does acquit Him. The Jews answered him, “We have a law”—it may not be your law—and by our law he ought to die because he made himself

the Son of God.” This is a reviving of the charge of blasphemy which they had brought against Him in the palace of the high priest.

7-8. *The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid!*

It shows he was afraid all along—the coward—the vacillating coward—and now a fresh superstition seizes upon him. He believed, as a Roman, in gods many. “What?” he said to himself. “What if, after all, I should have been torturing a divine Being, a God who has come among men in their likeness?”

9-10. *And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?*

And he trembled with fear, “and went again into the judgment hall,” taking his prisoner with him—you can see the two sitting there alone—“and saith unto Jesus, ‘Where are You from? Tell me now, what is Your character, Your origin, Your rank?’ But Jesus gave him no answer.” Pilate’s day of grace was over. He had had his opportunity, but that was now ended—there was no answer.

It is a very solemn thing when God gives no answer to a man—when a man turns to Scripture, but there is no answer—when he goes to hear the voice, but there is no voice from the oracle for him. And when he even bows the knee in prayer, but gets no answer. The silence of the Christ of God is very terrible. “Then saith Pilate unto him,” with all the pride of a Roman in his face, “Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?”

11. *Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*

“You have the power to execute the sentence, lent to you from heaven, but he that brought Me here, and laid the charge against Me, even Caiaphas, as the representative of the Jews, has the greater sin.” And then the Blessed One closed His lips, never to open them again until on the cross. From this time, “like a sheep before her shearers,” He is dumb.

Notice that even though that word is the word of the Judge who judges Pilate, who judges the Jews, yet there is a strain of the gentleness of His character about it, for though He does virtually declare Pilate guilty of great sin, yet He says there is a greater, and while there is no apology for Pilate, yet He puts it softly.

12. *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.*

One of the Herods had put upon his coins the name, “Caesar’s friend,” and so they quoted the title which one of their kings had taken, and they tell Pilate that he will not be the friend of Tiberius. Here was a sore point with Pilate. He knew that just then Tiberius was gloomy and morose, too ready to catch anything against his servants—and the man by whose influence Pilate had come into power had just then lost all influence at court. So he was afraid it would be his disgrace and discharge as governor if the Jews brought a charge against him to Tiberius. Therefore he trembled.

13. *When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.*

The usual form of the Roman judgment place, in the open air, with a stone pavement, and a raised throne.

14-15. *And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.*

“To crucify your King.” In bitter sarcasm—“You call Him, King, and ask to have Him crucified?” “The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’” Verily they thus proved the truth of that word, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come.” And here He was sent of God. He had come at last, for the scepter has evidently departed from Judah, and these men are crying, “We have no king but the alien monarch, the all-conquering Caesar.”

16. *Then he delivered him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led him away.*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.